

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT:

Empowering Workers to Meet The Global Challenge

Leaders at the Quebec City Summit recognized that job creation is the most direct way to raise standards of living in our hemisphere. At the same time, leaders realized that true prosperity can only be achieved by respecting the basic rights of workers. The challenge for governments is to empower workers and employers to better respond to both the opportunities and the challenges presented by globalization.

The Quebec City Plan of Action lays out a framework for improving labor conditions in our hemisphere. It calls on governments to observe core labor standards, improve working conditions, develop effective labor market policies, and take immediate action to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

The United States actively supports cooperation on labor issues to achieve our shared goals. We collaborate with multilateral fora and with hemispheric partners to implement initiatives that increase labor ministry administrative capacities and improve enforcement of domestic labor laws. We work to ensure that free trade increases worker well-being and reinforces basic worker rights. We share ideas on best practices for unemployment insurance, worker retraining, employment services, and occupational health and safety. And we promote policies that lead to economic growth, the engine for new and better jobs. Taken together, these steps will create new opportunities for raising workers' quality of life.



At the XIII Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor, held in Salvador do Bahia, Brazil, September 24-26, 2003, International Labor Organization Director General Juan Somavia (second from left) and Brazilian Minister of Labor Jacques Wagner (right) posed with Latin American representatives to the Youth Enterprise Network round table. (Welton Araujo, OAS)

U.S. ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE HEMISPHERE'S AGENDA

- The U.S. participates actively in the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML) to **build a dialogue on labor issues**. Through these meetings, ministers have recognized the importance of considering the social and labor aspects of hemispheric integration in all stages of the negotiations process and the role of social dialogue, labor reforms, and employment-generating policies in achieving economic recovery.
- The U.S. regularly **funds projects and workshops** to support implementation of labor initiatives from the Quebec Summit of the Americas and the IACML.
- Since 2001, the U.S. has provided over \$31 million for initiatives aimed at **strengthening the rule of labor law and building efficient and responsive labor markets** in the Americas. The U.S. has also provided over \$45 million in grants to assist 14 countries in the Americas to **combat hazardous child labor** in commercial sexual exploitation, agriculture, small-scale mining, domestic service, and fireworks production.